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RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D)

PAGE 01 CARACA 01989 01 OF 03 221659Z
ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-15	AMAD-01	CIAE-00	C-01	DODE-00	HA-09
	H-01	INRE-00	INR-01	L-03	ADS-00	M-01	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OMB-01	PA-01	PM-01	PRS-01	P-01	SNP-01
	SP-01	SS-01	TRSE-00	T-01	USIE-00	/042W	
					-----121426 221700Z /38		

P 221657Z FEB 92
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8559
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CARACAS 01989

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, CO, HA, VE
SUBJECT: [REDACTED] ON
THE POST-COUP ATTEMPT SITUATION

B1

REF: (A) CARACAS 0881 (NOTAL) (B) CARACAS 01564 (NOTAL)

1. C - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: [REDACTED]
MET WITH POLOFF ON FEBRUARY 21 TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF
[REDACTED]
THE SURVIVAL OF VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY. [REDACTED] THAT A
SUCCESSFUL COUP HERE WOULD HAVE A DOMINO EFFECT IN THE
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B1

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PAGE 02 CARACA 01989 01 OF 03 221659Z
HEMISPHERE, AND SUGGESTED THAT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY
LOBBY THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY IN SUPPORT OF DEMOCRACY. HE
REVEALED THAT AN EXISTING BICAMERAL COMMITTEE ON REFORM OF
THE CONSTITUTION SOON WILL PROPOSE A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY,
AS A MEANS OF OBTAINING A "NATIONAL CATHARSIS." [REDACTED]
THINKS THAT CAP IN THE MEANTIME SHOULD FORM A BROADER
BASED GOVERNMENT, TAKE EMERGENCY ECONOMIC MEASURES, AND
IMPROVE HIS COMMUNICATION WITH THE COUNTRY. [REDACTED]
SAID THAT THE ELECTION OF DAVID MORALES BELLO AS PRESIDENT
OF CONGRESS WOULD BE AN OPEN PROVOCATION TO THE ARMED

B1

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: NORMAN M BOUTON
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 21 FEB 2017
DATE/CASE ID: 28 JUL 2008 200503656

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FORCES. END SUMMARY.

3. POLOFF MET ON FEBRUARY 21 WITH [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] COMMENTED AS

FOLLOWS.

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PROSPECTS FOR VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY

5. [REDACTED] WORRIED ABOUT THE SURVIVAL OF VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY AND ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF ITS DEMISE, SHOULD THAT HAPPEN, ON OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE HEMISPHERE. IT WOULD HAVE A "DOMINO" EFFECT, HE ARGUED, CITING GUATEMALA, PERU AND BRAZIL AS THE NEXT TO FALL IN SUCH A SCENARIO. "FOR YOU," [REDACTED] "DEMOCRACY IS A REALITY, A 200-YEAR OLD TRADITION; FOR US LATIN AMERICANS, IT IS JUST AN EXPERIMENT." THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY COULD BE OF GREAT HELP, HE CONTINUED, IF IT WOULD VIGOROUSLY LOBBY THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY IN SUPPORT OF DEMOCRACY. THE PROBLEM, HE CONTINUED, IS THAT THE MILITARY ARE A PART OF THE PEOPLE, AND THE PEOPLE ARE DISSATISFIED.

B1

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REFORM OF THE CONSTITUTION

6. [REDACTED] THE BICAMERAL COMMISSION FOR REFORM OF THE CONSTITUTION, CHAIRED BY FORMER PRESIDENT RAFAEL CALDERA. HE SAID THAT IT WAS EXPEDITING ITS WORK IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE COUP ATTEMPT, AND WOULD PROBABLY BE READY TO PRESENT ITS RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CONGRESS IN MARCH AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NEXT REGULAR SESSION. IN

B1

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PAGE 04 CARACA 01989 01 OF 03 221659Z
ADDITION TO THE MEASURES THE COMMISSION HAD BEEN PLANNING TO RECOMMEND, [REDACTED] IT HAD DECIDED TO INCLUDE ONE NEW ONE IN LIGHT OF THE EVENTS OF FEBRUARY 4: THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE CONVOCATION OF A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY TO PROVIDE FOR NEEDED CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES. HE COMPARED THIS TO WHAT HAPPENED LAST YEAR IN COLOMBIA. EVEN MORE IMPORTANT, HE OBSERVED, WOULD BE THE ASSEMBLY'S FUNCTION OF PROVIDING A KIND OF "NATIONAL CATHARSIS", THUS HELPING AVOID THE BLOODSHED WHICH ANOTHER COUP ATTEMPT WOULD PROBABLY ENTAIL.

B1

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PAGE 01 CARACA 01989 02 OF 03 221703Z
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	H-01	INRE-00	INR-01	L-03	ADS-00	M-01	NSAE-00
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	SP-01	SS-01	TRSE-00	T-01	USIE-00	/042W	

-----12144C 221704Z /38

P 221657Z FEB 92

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8560
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 CARACAS 01989

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PREL, PGOV, CO, HA, VE

SUBJECT: [REDACTED] ON
THE POLITICAL CRISIS

B1

7. [REDACTED] SEES VENEZUELA AS IN THE THROES OF A SERIOUS
POLITICAL CRISIS SINCE THE FEBRUARY 4 COUP ATTEMPT.
ALTHOUGH, HE NOTED, COPEI HAS DECIDED NOT TO ACCEPT ANY
CABINET POSITIONS OR TO FORM A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL
UNITY, THE PARTY SUPPORTS EXTENSIVE CABINET CHANGES IN THE
DIRECTION OF A MORE BROADLY BASED GOVERNMENT. [REDACTED]
DEFLECTED A QUESTION ABOUT WHETHER, AS REPORTED IN THE

B1

[REDACTED]

CHARACTERIZED THE RUMORED APPOINTMENT OF ADECO LUIS
PINERUA ORDAZ AS MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR AS "EXCELLENT"
AND RECOMMENDED THE INCLUSION IN A NEW CABINET OF
RESPECTED INDEPENDENTS CLOSE TO COPEI, SUCH AS FORMER
AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. JULIO SOSA RODRIGUEZ. [REDACTED]
NOTED THE NEED FOR EMERGENCY ECONOMIC MEASURES: "AFTER
ALL, WE ARE IN AN EMERGENCY." FOR INSTANCE, HE CONTINUED,
THE GOVERNMENT COULD FREEZE THE PRICE OF GASOLINE AND
PUBLIC TRANSPORT, AND IT WOULD BE "EASY" TO THINK OF
SEVERAL OTHER QUICK FIXES.

CAP AND COMMUNICATION

8. [REDACTED] CRITICIZED CAP'S MANNER OF COMMUNICATING WITH
THE COUNTRY, PREFACING HIS REMARKS WITH THE OBSERVATION
THAT THE PRESIDENT, AS IN THE CASE OF MANY OTHER
SUCCESSFUL INDIVIDUALS, IS EXCESSIVELY "SELF-SUFFICIENT"
AND CONVINCED OF HIS OWN DESTINY. THESE CHARACTERISTICS
MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO LISTEN TO ANYONE ELSE.

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[REDACTED] THAT CAP ALSO SUFFERED FROM A DEFECT COMMON

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TO MANY VENEZUELAN: "VERBAL HEMMORAGING," DEFINED AS AN INABILITY TO KEEP QUIET. THE PRESIDENT HAS SPOKEN PUBLICLY SO OFTEN ABOUT SO MANY THINGS BOTH CONSEQUENTIAL AND TRIVIAL, THAT HE HAS BORED THE PEOPLE AND THEY NO LONGER LISTEN TO HIM. A PRESIDENT, [REDACTED] OUGHT TO SPEAK OUT ONLY WHEN HE HAD SOMETHING TO SAY. OTHERWISE, HE RISKS OBFUSCATING HIS MESSAGE. PARTICULARLY IN THE AREA OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, A PRESIDENT SHOULD CAREFULLY WEIGH HIS WORDS, GIVEN THE CONSEQUENCES THEY CAN HAVE. A GOOD EXAMPLE OF CAP'S INADEQUACY IN THIS REGARD, CONFIDENTIAL

B1

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PAGE 03 CARACA 01989 02 OF 03 221703Z
[REDACTED] WAS HIS RUNNING COMMENTARY ON COLOMBIA DURING THE MONTH BEFORE THE COUP.

HATRED OF CAP

9. [REDACTED] THAT HE WAS NOT SURPRISED BY THE APPARENTLY WIDESPREAD "HATRED" OF THE PRESIDENT. [REDACTED] CITED TWO REASONS FOR THIS PHENOMENON. FIRST, DEMOCRACY IS MORE HERE THAN A SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE; IT IS PERCEIVED AS A MEANS OF MAKING A LIVING. POPULIST GOVERNANCE, BY PROMISING EVERYTHING TO EVERYBODY, CONTRIBUTED TO THIS TREND. LIVING STANDARDS ROSE FOR SO LONG UNDER DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS THAT THEIR DECLINE BEGINNING IN THE LATE 1970S OR EARLY 1980S BEGAN TO DISCREDIT DEMOCRACY ITSELF. THIS POPULAR ATTITUDE IS A MANIFESTATION OF PATERNALISM IN VENEZUELAN CULTURE. CAP IS PERCEIVED AS HAVING DONE ALMOST NOTHING TO ARREST DECLINING STANDARDS OF LIVING, AT LEAST AMONG THE HARD-PRESSED MIDDLE CLASS. SECOND, THE ELEMENT OF PERSONALISM IN VENEZUELAN CULTURE CAUSES THE FORMATION OF A "BOND" BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND THE PEOPLE. IF HE FAILS TO MAKE GOOD ON HIS PROMISES, HE HAS PERSONALLY BETRAYED HIS SUPPORTERS. SO, TOO, IN CAP'S CASE. HE PROMISED A RETURN OF THE GOOD TIMES IN HIS CAMPAIGN BUT, ONCE IN OFFICE, HE ABOUT-FACED AND INAUGURATED A PAINFUL AUSTERITY PROGRAM. "NO WONDER SO MANY HATE HIM," [REDACTED] "THEY FEEL BETRAYED BY HIM."

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THE PRESIDENCY OF CONGRESS

10. AGUILAR CONFIRMED THAT COPEI WOULD NOT SUPPORT AD
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PAGE 04 CARACA 01989 02 OF 03 221703Z
SENATOR DAVID MORALES BELLO AS PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS WHEN
IT FORMALLY RECONVENES IN ITS FIRST ORDINARY SESSION OF
THE YEAR, EARLY NEXT MONTH. MORALES' COMMENT OF "DEATH TO
THE GOLPISTAS" DURING THE FEBRUARY 4 SESSION OF CONGRESS
(HELD TO APPROVE THE SUSPENSION OF CONSTITUTIONAL
GUARANTEES) HAD DEEPLY OFFENDED MANY MILITARY OFFICERS,
[REDACTED] FOR THIS REASON ALONE HIS ELEVATION TO THE
POSITION OF PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS WOULD CONSTITUTE AN OPEN
PROVOCATION TO THE ARMED FORCES. [REDACTED] THAT THERE
WAS CONSIDERABLE SENTIMENT IN "DEMOCRATIC ACTION" (AD)
AGAINST MORALES BELLO, BUT LAMENTED THAT THE PARTY ITSELF
WAS STILL ON RECORD AS SUPPORTING HIM FOR THIS POSITION.

B1

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-----121450 221704Z /38

P 221657Z FEB 92
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8561
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 CARACAS 01989

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E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR

TAGS: PREL, PGOV, CO, HA, VE

SUBJECT: [REDACTED] ON

(COMMENT: [REDACTED] TOLD

POLCOUNS FEBRUARY 21 THAT THE ISSUE OF STICKING WITH
MORALES, OR NOT, WAS STILL OPEN AND WOULD BE DECIDED AT A
CEN MEETING ON FEBRUARY 24. HE DECLINED TO PREDICT WHICH
WAY THE VOTE WOULD GO.) ADMITTEDLY, [REDACTED] AD HAD
COME OUT FOR MORALES BELLO BEFORE THE COUP ATTEMPT AND
WOULD FIND IT EMBARRASSING TO RETRACT ITS ENDORSEMENT.
BUT, PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES SUGGESTED THAT A LITTLE
EMBARASSMENT MIGHT BE BETTER THAN A SECOND COUP ATTEMPT.

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11. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.
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